

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Air Quality

Air quality has become an increasing concern as the nature and extent of pollution have become better identified and its adverse effects upon the public health made clearer. Federal legislation such as the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) and TEA-21 have detailed the linkage between transportation planning and air quality. That legislation set air quality standards through the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). In areas where that standard is not met, it must be demonstrated that transportation plans and projects will reduce motor vehicle emissions

Dutchess County is part of the Mid-Hudson Ozone Nonattainment Area, which also includes Putnam and Northern Orange counties. In 1991 the area was designated a Marginal Nonattainment Area with an expected attainment date of 1993. Additional exceedences were measured in 1991 and 1993, and the region was designated a Moderate Nonattainment Area in late 1994 and that classification is still in effect.

The Final Rule for Air Quality Conformity (40 CFR Parts 51 and 93) issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on November 24, 1993 contains Section 93.122(e)(1) which allows a TIP update to satisfy the conformity requirements without a new regional emissions analysis if the existing analysis for the Long-Range Transportation Plan is valid and if the following requirements are met:

- The TIP contains all projects that must be started in the TIP's timeframe in order to achieve the highway and transit system envisioned by the Plan.
- All TIP projects, which are regionally significant, are included in the Plan with design concept and scope adequate to determine their contribution to the Plan's regional emissions at the time of the Plan's conformity analysis.
- The design concept and scope of each regionally significant project in the TIP is not significantly different from that described in the Plan.

The following steps were taken to ensure that the three conditions of Section 93.122(e) are met as described above:

- 1) Project listings from the regional emissions analysis performed for the current long-range transportation plan in 1998 and the 2002-2006 TIP, were reviewed by appropriate members of PDCTC staff and member agencies to determine that the three conditions are met as described above.
- 2) The updated project information was then reviewed with interested Federal and State agency staff through interagency consultation.
- 3) Updated project information obtained through this review confirmed that the three conditions of Section 93.122(e) are met.

The 2004-2006 TIP meets the requirements of Section 93.122(e) of the Final Rule, which allows a TIP update to satisfy the conformity requirements without a new regional emissions analysis. This option was pursued in consultation with Federal oversight agencies and NYSDOT-EAB. Adoption of this new three-year TIP will enable the PDCTC to continue to advance the strategies and improvements of the existing Long-Range Transportation Plan and the 2004-2006 TIP. The PDCTC has made a good faith effort to implement and follow the procedures of the applicable rules and regulations governing the implementation of transportation conformity. The 2004-2006 TIP meets those requirements and therefore conforms to the applicable State Implementation Plan (SIP).

Conformity Analysis Project Descriptions

The first step is determining which projects might affect air quality. In general, projects such as safety improvements, resurfacing, bridge repair, and bus replacements, which maintain current levels of service or capacity, are considered **exempt** from the conformity analysis. Similarly, projects that result in operations improvements, but do not increase capacity, like intersection widening, are also excluded from the analysis.

Regionally Significant projects are transportation projects (other than exempt projects) that are on a facility which serves regional transportation needs and would normally be included in the modeling of a metropolitan area's transportation network, including, at a minimum, all principal arterial highways and all fixed guideway transit facilities that offer an alternative to regional highway travel.

Non-exempt projects include highway and road projects that increase capacity by at least one travel lane, transit projects that change capacity on a fixed route system.

The following projects have been identified as Non-exempt or Regionally Significant, the dates reflect full operation and have been included in the air quality modeling process.

Regional Bus Services - Dutchess to Putnam County (DC LOOP) – 2003*

Wassaic Parking Expansion (MTA/Metro-North Railroad) – 2005

Rt. 9 Service Road (NYSDOT) - 2006

Rt. 9: CR 93 (Myers Corners Rd.) to Mesier Ave. (NYSDOT) – 2006

TSP Park and Ride (NYSDOT) - TBD

*Projects include CMAQ funding

The analysis indicated that the PDCTC 2002-2006 TIP would meet the requirements of the 1990 CAAA regarding the conformity of transportation programs. The analysis demonstrated that emission levels of hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides (the precursors to ozone formation) are lower for the TIP in 2006, 2015 and 2020, relative to the “no-build” condition, and are also lower than 1990 or 1996 emission levels.

The Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council completed a draft comprehensive long-range (20-year), multi-modal transportation plan, *Connections 2025* for Dutchess County in August 2003. Two public information meetings were held on September 30, 2003, and the PDCTC Executive Committee approved the plan by mail ballot on November 28, 2003. A

conformity analysis was conducted on the Plan and the 2004-2006 TIP and they were found to meet applicable air quality requirements.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

The United States Department of Transportation includes as one of its policy objectives the conservation of energy by encouraging the development and implementation of transportation system improvements that reduce the consumption of fossil fuels. Energy conservation is among the many significant benefits of the projects in the TIP.

The PDCTC is committed to fulfill the transportation goals and recommendations of the New York State Energy Plan (SEP). The 2004-2006 TIP contains no new regionally significant projects; therefore no quantitative energy assessment is required at this time. A full quantitative assessment is expected when the next TIP update is completed. The proposed TIP update emphasizes maintenance of the existing transportation infrastructure, which can reduce congestion and vehicle wear and tear, both factors in energy usage. Projects that contribute to energy conservation include signalization improvements, traffic controls, ridesharing activities, park-and-ride lots, and transit improvements that remove single occupant vehicles from the road. There are many projects currently shown on the TIP that will contribute to a reduction in the consumption of fossil fuels.

In addition, *Connections 2025* focuses on many programs and policies that complement the SEP such as: the promotion of energy efficient alternatives, open space, quality communities, identification of policies and actions that support energy efficient transportation and transportation energy efficient land use decisions.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

During the development of the 2004-2006 TIP, the PDCTC provided citizens, as well as public agencies, with the opportunity to participate in activities that support the development of the TIP. Concerted efforts were made to reach a broader cross section of the public. Meetings of the Council were open to the public, and were publicized by press releases and the distribution of meeting announcements by mail. Council meetings reserved time for public input and commentary, and Council members remained accessible to the public between meetings through their positions in their respective organizations.

A presentation on the TIP was provided at the May 7, 2003, Executive Meeting, which was open to the public. The Technical Committee then reviewed the draft 2004-2006 TIP at its June 16, 2003 meeting. This draft TIP was presented to the public at a public information meeting held July 29, 2003 at the Dutchess County Planning Department. The mailing for this public meeting was extensive with project information being distributed prior to the meeting for public review. In addition, the summary and draft project listings were posted on the PDCTC website.

Copies of comments on the 2004-2006 TIP are included in the Appendix.

In addition to the public participation conducted on the 2004-2006 TIP, public participation in the transportation planning process is also conducted through a variety of groups, as described below:

The Poughkeepsie-Dutchess County Transportation Council publishes a quarterly newsletter, which summarizes the work of the staff, the status of on going studies and projects, and pertinent transportation planning news. The Council also maintains an internet homepage, which provides a variety of information about PDCTC activities and allows users to download key publications.

The Dutchess County Planning Board meets at least six times a year as an advisory group to the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development. It has been meeting in this capacity since 1961. Members are appointed annually by the Dutchess County Executive. The nine members represent various aspects of the community, including, but not limited to, education, labor, agriculture, industry, commerce, and citizens at large. One member is a resident of the City of Beacon, one a resident of the City of Poughkeepsie, one a resident of one of the villages in Dutchess County, and six members are residents of Dutchess County residing outside of any incorporated city or village.

The Dutchess County Traffic Safety Board promotes and encourages street and highway safety through educational programs, data gathering, and coordination of federal and state highway safety grants to local governments as authorized by the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law. The 18 members, one of whom is a resident of the City of Poughkeepsie, one of whom is a resident of the City of Beacon, are appointed by the County Executive. The Board meets monthly.

The Dutchess County Dial-A-Ride Board meets quarterly as an advisory group to the Dutchess County Office for Aging and the Dutchess County LOOP bus system. The eight members are appointed by their respective supervisors or mayors. The members represent the City of Poughkeepsie and the towns of East Fishkill, Fishkill, Hyde Park, LaGrange, Pleasant Valley, Poughkeepsie, Wappinger, Red Hook, Rhinebeck and Beekman. The Board is responsible for reviewing all aspects of Dial-A-Ride operations.

The 35 members of the Dutchess County Legislature, although not a citizens committee, do represent a constituency of more than 250,000 citizens. Chaired by Bradford Kendall, the Legislature approves the budgets of the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, which help to shape departmental policy. Staff members meet with subcommittees, committees, and the entire Legislature as required. The Legislature meets a minimum of once a month.

The eight member Common Council of the City of Poughkeepsie holds public hearings on any major city transit project including projected fare or route changes, applications for Capital or Operating assistance and the annual department budget.

In addition to various citizens advisory boards, the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development prints a newsletter which deals, in part, with transportation issues. "Plan On It" is the newsletter of the Dutchess County Planning Federation. The newsletter routinely includes articles about the PDCTC and its activities.

Metro-North Railroad also participates in the public meeting on the TIP held by the MPO. At these meetings Metro-North discusses its service strategies and capital projects, and answers questions and responds to comments concerning specific projects on the TIP. Metro-North also facilitates public participation, which has taken the form of meetings with government officials, transportation providers and private citizens.

Public participation is also a major component of the environmental review process that is conducted on projects.

ELDERLY AND PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

Meeting the requirements of the special needs of the region's elderly and residents with special needs, as well as other transportation disadvantaged groups, continues to be an important element of the transportation planning process. This emphasis was reinforced by the approval of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 15c is part of the New York State Transportation Law. The efforts toward providing an accessible transportation system are generally viewed from the perspective of integration of accessibility features into highway projects and acquisitions and/or retrofit of transit vehicles, terminals, and station facilities.

Highway System

The development of most highway projects consider the special needs of the elderly and disabled persons, and to the extent possible, include specific features and design details to address those needs. In most cases, the inclusion of pedestrian facilities in the design of highway projects also considers the special needs of disabled individuals.

Typical of the design features and details of highway/pedestrian facilities are curb cuts at intersections and crosswalks, ramps in station and terminal facilities, reserved parking spaces for disabled individuals, special signing, convenient location/height for walk light buttons, design of pavement and use of materials which consider the limitations of wheelchair operation, installation of rails, landings, and a non-slip surface on stairs and ramps, special sanitary facilities at comfort stations and the use of audible "walk" signals for blind persons.

There are currently projects shown on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which will improve the mobility of disabled persons. In addition, all current NYSDOT projects either in the design phase or under construction are in compliance with all current ADA standards and requirements. Examples of these requirements include sidewalk widths and heights, sidewalk intersections and clearances and the size and shape of disabled ramps and railings.

Transit System

The accessibility of the transit system is primarily the responsibility of the public and private operators with systematic modifications and additions to their systems being continual. Many of these efforts are described on the following pages, and shown in the TIP project listings.

Dutchess County and City of Poughkeepsie

Dutchess County LOOP and City of Poughkeepsie Transit continue to make excellent progress toward meeting the transportation needs of the County's elderly and disabled residents. Efforts have focused on: developing and maintaining the Dutchess County Dial-A-Ride and Rural Para Transit Systems, developing a more efficient para-transit system, educating the public on the use of mass transit, examining service alternatives, continuing the discount fare program, and continuing support of the 5311 program.

On both the LOOP and City of Poughkeepsie Bus System half-fare discounts are offered to Medicare card holders, elderly, and disabled persons at all times.

The major vocational rehabilitation programs (Rehabilitation Program, Inc. and the Dutchess County Association for Retarded Citizens) consolidated their respective transit operations under a single provider in 1979. This consolidated system has expanded to include additional contractual arrangements with human service agencies so that other Dutchess County agencies that have clients in outlying areas can contract on a "seat-available" basis or can subcontract for vehicles on off-peak hours (such as noon time pickup for half-day programs).

The LOOP Bus System operates five commuter runs that stop in front of sheltered workshops to assist mildly disabled people in their trips to work. These routes are an integral part of the LOOP Bus System. They have served to "mainstream" a population that previously commuted to and from their work sites in agency-owned segregated vehicles into the public transportation network.

The successful trip voucher program, begun in 1980, continues to expand. At present the Dutchess County Department of Mental Hygiene issues vouchers to eligible clients in lieu of petty cash. The voucher can be used on either participating taxis or participating public and private bus routes. The Dutchess County Department of Social Services has been issuing single bus tickets to eligible clients since 1985 to facilitate travel throughout the County.

Currently the elderly and disabled population is served by two geographically distinct demand responsive systems. Dial-A-Ride serves residents of the western half of the county and Dutchess County Rural Para-Transit serves residents of the eastern half. Specifically, the Dial-A-Ride area includes the City of Poughkeepsie and the Towns of Beekman, East Fishkill, Fishkill, Hyde Park, LaGrange, Pleasant Valley, Poughkeepsie, Red Hook, Rhinebeck, & Wappinger. Further information on either service is available from LOOP.

The Dutchess County LOOP Bus/Dial-A-Ride system provides public transportation service two days per week to the Castle Point Veterans Administration Hospital. The service will accept reservation requests from locations throughout Dutchess County as scheduling and capacity permits. In 1997, LOOP started running a complementary para-transit service to fulfill ADA requirements. Dutchess County provides a service for both LOOP and Poughkeepsie Transit fixed-route service.

Advisory boards provide input and access to Dial-A-Ride and the developing ADA para-transit service. In both cases, efforts were made to include people who use the services, as well as representatives of public and private organizations with interest in the elderly or disabled populations.

The Dial-A-Ride Advisory Board meets quarterly to monitor the service. Representatives from each of the participating municipalities as well as representatives from the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, Dutchess County Office for Aging, and the private operator review current issues such as rider complaints, funding constraints, service expansion, and service effectiveness.

Metro-North Railroad

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that key designated transportation stations and vehicles be made accessible to individuals with special needs. The regulations further require that alterations and new facilities be constructed in compliance with ADA guidelines. Poughkeepsie has been designated as a key station along the Hudson Line in Dutchess County.

The accessibility improvements at the key stations include new and/or renovated overpasses with elevators to each platform, new mini-high level platforms (West of Hudson), audio-visual information systems, tactile warning strips, accessible rest rooms, enhanced lighting, accessible ticket windows and telephones, accessible route signage, curb cuts and accessible parking spaces for autos and vans.

Capital improvements at stations other than designated key stations have continued to improve the overall accessibility of Metro-North Railroad for individuals with disabilities. The Poughkeepsie Station has a new parking garage and intermodal facility that is in compliance with ADA requirements. The new stations at Ten Mile River and Wassaic are also accessible. As part of parking expansion and improvement projects, the appropriate number of accessible parking spaces will be provided in compliance with ADA.

ADA also requires that one accessible car per train be provided no later than July 26, 1995. In addition, all cars purchased after August 25, 1990 must be accessible. Metro-North completed a program to retrofit the existing fleet to meet the one accessible car per train rule. The retrofit program provides two spaces for mobility aids in each accessible car. In addition, each accessible car includes a portable bridge plate to provide the required gap closure between the rail car and platform, and a method to stow the bridge plate against the windscreen of the accessible vehicle. Ten 1100 ACMU and one of every car pair/triplet were made accessible under the 1992-1996 Capital Program, providing for more than one accessible car required under the regulations. In addition, 49 new coaches purchased under the 1992-96 capital program and 50 center door coaches under the 1995 - 99 Capital Program are each equipped with fully accessible features. All equipment purchased in the 2004 - 2006 Capital Program will also meet ADA requirements.

